

Event Speaker Biography



Yusra Mardini

Olympic swimmer, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador

Yusra Mardini is an Olympic swimmer, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador, and the subject of the critically-acclaimed Netflix film; “The Swimmers”. Born and raised in Damascus, Syria, Yusra and her sister, Sara, made the difficult decision to flee the civil war in 2015 and undertake a perilous journey to safety. After reaching Europe, Yusra and her sister made their way to Berlin, Germany, where they found their new home and Yusra resumed her swimming training. Her dream of participating in the Olympic Games came true with the Refugee Olympic Team at the Rio 2016 Games, and again at the Tokyo 2020 Games.

In 2017, Yusra was appointed the youngest-ever UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. In this role, Yusra advocates for the more than 90 million refugees and internally displaced around the world. Yusra’s incredible story is told in her memoir “Butterfly: From Refugee to Olympian-My Story of Rescue, Hope and Triumph” and in the critically-acclaimed Netflix film, The Swimmers. She has also recently established her own charitable foundation, The Yusra Mardini Foundation, which will support young people and refugees through sports programs and humanitarian assistance. Last month, in recognition of their advocacy for refugees, she and her sister were named by Time Magazine to their list of the “100 Most Influential People in the World”.